

**NY 7 / NY 2 Corridor Transportation and Land Use Plan
Colonie, New York**

Issues Identification Workshop
November 17, 2004

A public meeting was held on November 17, 2004 to introduce the NY 7 / NY 2 Corridor Transportation and Land Use Plan Study to the public. The study is co-sponsored by the Town of Colonie and the Capital District Transportation Committee.

Following a brief presentation and project overview, attendees broke into four groups for the Public Workshop. To facilitate a discussion about transportation and land use issues, each group was asked to answer two questions:

- What is working in the corridor?
- What is not working in the corridor?

A total of 168 comments were recorded. Common themes included neighborhood livability/quality of life, specific traffic concerns, the need for improved pedestrian and bicycle linkages, and aesthetics both in terms of transportation related improvements, and the built environment including commercial buildings, lighting, green space, etc. The individual comments are listed as follows:

Group 1

What is working?

- 1.1 Strong neighborhoods (especially on the north side of Route 7)
- 1.2 Status Quo – things are good now (but already declining)
- 1.3 New Wade Road – makes connection to Sparrowbush well
- 1.4 Good area to do business, convenient
- 1.5 Convenient services for residents
- 1.6 For workers – convenient services nearby (for lunch, etc.)
- 1.7 The 5 lane road has worked well
- 1.8 Sidewalks –walking is nice
- 1.9 Airport
- 1.10 Proximity to River – open spaces
 - a. Perhaps there is an opportunity to expand open spaces
- 1.11 Decent job of access management by the Town and DOT
- 1.12 Major time periods during the day when there are no travel problems (non-peak times)
- 1.13 There are alternative ways around this corridor/area
- 1.14 Schools (Forts Ferry) – 3 districts in this corridor are all good
- 1.15 Mix of business types -retail, services, manufacturing

- 1.16 Parallel (to Route 7) interlinking roads through residential neighborhoods – Don't have to get on Route 7 for every trip
- 1.17 Doesn't look like Wolf Rd and Central Ave. Keep it that way.
- 1.18 Kids can/do walk to school. (but there is concern for the future)
- 1.19 Significant wildlife and vegetation in areas
- 1.20 Small areas for recreation (pocket parks) are easy to get to by car. Could improve bike and pedestrian access.
- 1.21 Proximity to Capital District (15-20 minutes to anywhere).

What isn't working?

- 1.22 South Wade Rd – still just 2 lanes – should be 4 lanes to exit 5 and exit 4
- 1.23 At southeast corner of Wade Road / Route 7 intersection- medical bldg. has an entrance and exit driveway too close to the intersection
- 1.24 Sparrowbush, Mill, and Forts Ferry Roads – heavier and heavier volumes, no ROW to widen these
- 1.25 Rush hour congestion is a problem
- 1.26 Nothing should be done to Mill Road – it is an entrance to a residential area
- 1.27 Same for Sparrowbush and Forts Ferry Roads – ties to Delphus Kill – stay residential - no new roads or commercial uses. Residential will create traffic too but control the density, preserve some open space, etc.
- 1.28 Delphus Kill – important tributary to the Mohawk River – opportunity to conserve open space (create a park?)
- 1.29 Limit commercial trucks on Mill Rd
- 1.30 Concern about Exit 6 project. What is planned?
- 1.31 Connect bike path to British American (and to Shaker settlement)
- 1.32 Need better bus service and facilities (turn-offs, shelters, etc.)
- 1.33 Area between Sparrowbush and the Mohawk River is unzoned – big concern – zone it sensibly
- 1.34 Sidewalks are there but they don't connect to anything. Can't walk to anywhere – sidewalks end. No safe bike lanes. Vast distances across parking lots, etc.
- 1.35 Town doesn't take responsibility for sidewalks - especially on side streets. It's a piecemeal system
- 1.36 Residential areas right next to commercial – need some way to change property zoning to commercial (right on Rt 7)
- 1.37 Sidewalks – good plowing in winter. In the summer planting strips go to weeds. Maintenance issue.
- 1.38 No neighborhood stores – no little place you can walk to.
- 1.39 Determine how much cut-through traffic actually exists, local generation versus pass through.
- 1.40 Buffer residential across from commercial along Route 7
- 1.41 Aesthetics – all concrete and asphalt – beautification - boulevard? But, must provide maintenance for this otherwise don't bother.
- 1.42 Telephones poles – utility lines. Could they be underground?
- 1.43 Town could afford to beautify some areas.

- 1.44 Light pollution from commercial areas.
- 1.45 Traffic lights – at Wade Rd and Sparrowbush and Rt 9. Improve the aesthetics of these lights (fixtures)
- 1.46 Protect neighborhoods from cut-through traffic. This is a major quality of life and safety concern. Even the local streets between the connectors.
- 1.47 Think ahead – be proactive in looking to future, don't create the same problems. (monitor plan)
- 1.48 Expedite the process. Finish and implement the plan.
- 1.49 Be proactive about attracting the kinds of business we want.
- 1.50 Speed monitoring – cameras
- 1.51 Encourage more walking, bicycling, carpooling (HOV lanes)

Group 2

What is working?

- 2.1 Location – 20 minutes from “everywhere”
- 2.2 Traffic signal timing generally provides a consistent traffic flow
- 2.3 Convenient services
- 2.4 Proximate to river
- 2.5 Bike path is close
- 2.6 Mixture of development – farmhouses, etc.
- 2.7 Integrity of neighborhoods is generally maintained
- 2.8 Emergency services good (as well as access)
- 2.9 Reasonable taxes for services provided.
- 2.10 Maintained as a “clean” corridor given the extent of traffic/use.
- 2.11 Police are responsive to complaints (cut-through/speed)

What isn't working?

- 2.12 Extensive traffic on the east side of Route 7 makes access/egress difficult for some residences
- 2.13 Lack of mass transit (traffic from north goes to Rt 9)
- 2.14 Some problems appear to be left to local community level
- 2.15 Transportation planning process is lengthy
- 2.16 Numerous traffic signals between Latham Circle and Wade Road begs for an alternative
- 2.17 Traffic seeking an alternative route from Alt 7 goes to Rt 2 (moving the problem)
- 2.18 Avoidance of congestion spawns cut-throughs (Omega Terrace, Mill Rd, Service Rd, Forts Ferry, Utica to Rt 155)
- 2.19 Zoning focused commercial development in a single area – exit 6
- 2.20 Cooperation regionally as well as with neighboring communities (Schenectady, Saratoga counties) is necessary
- 2.21 Transition/buffers between zones (commercial to residential, mining to residential, etc.)
- 2.22 Communication between agencies and community
- 2.23 Lack of impact review at conclusion of development (take time to review)

- 2.24 Noise for “run-ups”/airport maintenance. Poor communication between airport and neighborhoods (current construction at north runway)
- 2.25 Coordinate with Niskayuna (to west)
- 2.26 Speeding enforcement (not as evident in Colonie vs Niskayuna)
- 2.27 Grass mowing maintenance (responsibility uncertain)
- 2.28 Undergrounding of electricity, utilities in the long term.
- 2.29 Question of viability of north service drive
- 2.30 Environmental emergency re: material storage
- 2.31 Add local residents and businesses to advisory (working) committee
- 2.32 Will east-west runway expansion occur? What are the airport plans?
- 2.33 Better coordination/shared or multiple-use of cell towers
- 2.34 “Mixed use” sounds ok on the south side of Route 7, but consider a mix without residential
- 2.35 Consider more green space (pocket parks as in Rt 378/Rt 9)
- 2.36 What is the current percentage of build-out in the corridor?
- 2.37 Pedestrian bridge/shuttles between malls (Latham Farms, Target)
- 2.38 Use of moratorium should include restrictions/”teeth” – should have included the entire town
- 2.39 Need to promote re-use of under-utilized/vacant structures
- 2.40 “Delphus Kill Park”
- 2.41 Connection to parks, open spaces, and inter neighborhood (need car to take bike to bike trail)
- 2.42 Sidewalks don’t feel safe on Rt 7
- 2.43 Not “safe” for bikes either.
- 2.44 Consider no right on red at exit 6/route 7 northbound and southbound

Group 3

What is working?

- 3.1 Convenience to I-90, I-87, Rt 9 (however, the convenience is often impeded by congestion)
- 3.2 Alternate routes exist within the corridor (for example Vly Rd to Rt 7 to Shaker). Radio stations and signage warn of the need to take alternate routes.
- 3.3 Rural/residential feel is nice, but is changing (or has changed)
- 3.4 Preserve what remains of the open space and vacant land
- 3.5 Old Niskayuna Rd was once a good alternative road to bypass congestion on Rt 7
- 3.6 Fragments of sidewalks are not welcoming due to lack of maintenance and are not connected to anything. Sidewalks stop abruptly. There is much room for improvement.
- 3.7 Buses have bike racks (however not all buses have racks and it is difficult to know when a bike-friendly bus will be available - unpredictable)
- 3.8 Bike trail – few access points. Need better signage that the trail is available and more visible access points
- 3.9 Wade Rd Extension has improved traffic

- 3.10 Turnover of residential uses (increased thru traffic, could this be changed to a cluster of residential or townhomes?)
- 3.11 Good tax base

What isn't working?

- 3.12 Lack of vision – land use, enforcement of regulations
- 3.13 No land use aesthetics
- 3.14 Hostile for bikes. Need 5-6 foot lanes for bikes on roads and separate bike routes where necessary
- 3.15 Street crossings aren't safe. Maybe mid-block crossings are needed with good design.
- 3.16 There is no public gathering space. What about a YMCA or park? Create something that relates to the river, Delphus Kill, etc.
- 3.17 Big box development is auto-oriented
- 3.18 Noise control – traffic, airport, enforcement, developers, impact of green space to absorb noise, construction, etc.
- 3.19 Thru traffic in neighborhoods (speeding, safety issues, schools, quality of life). Possibly close the streets or make them one-way.
- 3.20 Loss of civility on Rt 7 (behavior is a problem - many users don't care about those that live there or respect their rights; yield to pedestrians)
- 3.21 River Road – speeding in the area. Dangerous for bikes, pedestrians, etc.
- 3.22 What is the vision for the corridor? Transportation design is dependent upon the vision.
- 3.23 No additional big box – it will just expand problems
 - a. If there is development have more office, not retail.
- 3.24 Electric buses with routes convenient to the workplace
- 3.25 Light timing for a specific speed; additional lights?
- 3.26 Turning lanes to help with traffic
- 3.27 Better signage for drivers
- 3.28 Use technology (such as pedestrian signals)
- 3.29 Encourage smaller stores, walkable design, mixed-use development, etc
- 3.30 Redevelopment should be encouraged
- 3.31 Natural features. Many streams (some have been buried), can be used for storm water management
- 3.32 Encourage property maintenance
- 3.33 Encourage more transit
- 3.34 Create a bike trail connection from British American to Mohawk Bike Trail
- 3.35 Allow traffic flow on Rt 7, while maintaining community character
- 3.36 Current vacant land could be used to support community (parks, etc.)

Group 4

What is working?

- 4.1 Generally acceptable traffic operations outside of peak hours
- 4.2 Accessibility
- 4.3 Tax Base

- 4.4 The area had character, like to recapture
- 4.5 Existing bike path
- 4.6 Managing site access from new developments
- 4.7 Centralized study area location

What isn't working?

- 4.8 Unsignalized access to Rt 7 is difficult during peak hours
- 4.9 New development put pressure on existing public services (fire, police, etc.)
- 4.10 Lack of bike path linkage
- 4.11 No shoulder on Burmaster Rd
- 4.12 Keeler Motors tests and tunes on local roads, therefore speeding, noise and safety issues.
- 4.13 Cut-through traffic on Mill and Sparrowbush Rd
- 4.14 Improper use of two-way-continuous-left-turn-lane.
- 4.15 Traffic operation near service road opposite NYSUT – several curb cuts
- 4.16 Tax (Niskayuna school tax)
- 4.17 Airport impact on commercial properties
- 4.18 Incompatible land uses – commercial/residential proximity

What can be done?

- 4.19 Promote appropriate development in the Delphus Kill area to minimize traffic impact
- 4.20 Protect neighborhoods
- 4.21 Need buffers between incompatible land uses
- 4.22 Close Ronald Drive
- 4.23 Zoning near Service Rd should be revised to residential
- 4.24 Pursue development mitigation
- 4.25 Less density
- 4.26 Access management near exit 6 (hotel, target)
- 4.27 Traffic calming at Mill Rd/Sparrowbush Rd – Mill Road one way?
- 4.28 Keep Rt. 7 traffic moving efficiently – some spot capacity improvements?

Final Public Comments

- 5.1 Forts Ferry to New Wade Rd needs better lighting
- 5.2 Delphus Kill – No connector road, have as residential
- 5.3 Neighborhood Representation in area of moratorium
- 5.4 Mitigation fees – local businesses are impacted (fairness issue)
- 5.5 Notification of meetings in timely manner (Perry Ave)
- 5.6 Let Mohawk River develop slowly – preserve area near Burmaster.
- 5.7 Include a property owner tax reduction during the period of the moratorium.
- 5.8 Include business owners and residents on the advisory committee
- 5.9 No new roads from Route 7 to the river